

CLYDE ROBERT BULLA

Shoeshine Girl

ALS
SHOESHINE
CORNER

HELP
WANTED

"I'm Sarah Ida Becker
and I want to work for you."



Palmville

The train stopped at Palmville, and Sarah Ida had a sudden thought. What if she didn't get off? What if she just rode on to the end of the line? Maybe she could find a place where everything was new and she could start all over again.

But people would ask questions. *How old are you? . . . Only ten and a half? What are you doing here all by yourself?* Someone would be sure to find her and bring her back.

Anyway, it was too late. Aunt Claudia had already seen her. Aunt Claudia was at the station, looking through the train window and waving.

Palmville

Sarah Ida picked up her suitcase.

“Here, little lady, I’ll help you with that,” said the porter.

“I can carry it myself,” she said, and she dragged it off the train.

Aunt Claudia gave her a kiss that smelled like cough drops. Then they took a taxi. They rode through town, and Aunt Claudia talked. “You’ve grown, but I knew you the minute I saw you. You’ve got your mother’s pretty brown eyes, but you’ve got your father’s jaw. Look—over there. That’s our new supermarket. Things may seem quiet to you here, after the city, but I think you’ll like Palmville. It’s getting to be quite a city, too.”

Sarah Ida said nothing.

“We’re on Grand Avenue,” said Aunt Claudia. “It’s the main street.” The taxi turned off the avenue and stopped in front of a square, gray house.

While Aunt Claudia paid the driver, Sarah Ida looked at the house. It was old, with a new coat of paint. It had spidery-looking porches and balconies.

Palmville

They went inside.

"There's the telephone," said Aunt Claudia. "Your mother wanted you to call as soon as you got here."

"Why?" asked Sarah Ida.

"So she'd know you got here all right."

"*You* call her," said Sarah Ida.

"All right." Aunt Claudia went to the telephone. "I'll dial the number for you."

"Don't dial it for me," said Sarah Ida. "I'm not going to talk to her."

Aunt Claudia's mouth opened and closed. Then she said, "It's been a long trip, and I know you're tired. Come on upstairs. Shall I help you with your suitcase?"

"No," said Sarah Ida.

They climbed the stairs. Aunt Claudia opened a door. "This is your room."

Sarah Ida looked about the room. It wasn't bad. She rather liked the rag rugs on the dark wood floor, and she didn't mind the rocking chair. But the window curtains were fussy. So was the bed cover. And the pictures on the

Who ever heard of a shoeshine *girl*?

The last thing Sarah Ida wants to do is spend the summer with her Aunt Claudia. But when her parents send her away because of problems at home, that is exactly what she has to do. With no allowance and no fun to be had, Sarah Ida decides to look for a job. But who will hire a ten year old? Al, the shoeshine man, will!

Sarah loves her job, even if it means getting knee-deep in shoe polish everyday. Then something terrible happens and it looks like the shoeshine stand will have to close forever. If Sarah Ida wants to keep it open, she'll have to learn a few lessons about growing up along the way. . . .


"An excellent realistic story."

—Chicago Tribune

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